

**MINUTES
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**MARCH 5, 2003
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO
FLEISCHMANN AGRICULTURE BUILDING ROOM 214
RENO, NV 89557**

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. The meeting was called to order at 9:07 a.m. on Wednesday, March 5, 2003, by Commissioner James Settlemeyer. Self-introductions of those present follows:

MEMBERS PRESENT

James Settlemeyer, Gardnerville
Vance Vesco, Winnemucca
Patsy Tomera, Carlin
Keith Whipple, Hiko
Judy Laws, Las Vegas
Dr. Rangesan Narayanan, UNR, College of Agriculture

MEMBERS ABSENT

Paul Iverson, Reno
Sterling Wines, East Ely
Richard Mieldazis, Zephyr Cove

OTHERS PRESENT

Ann Mori, Division of State Lands
Pam Wilcox, Administrator, Division of Conservation Districts
Jessica Wade, USFS
Kelly McGowan, Division of Conservation Districts
Butch Hayes, BLM
Mike Cox, Division of Wildlife
Roger Van Valkenburg, Farm Service Agency
Richard Vigil, Natural Resources Conservation Service

II. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 28 & 29, 2003

Keith Whipple moved to approve the minutes from the October 28 & 29, 2003, meetings.
Judy Laws seconded the motion. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS – Kelly McGowan

A. The following items were reviewed:

1. Announcements

- a. The Spring NACD Legislative conference will be held in Washington, DC, on March 17-19, 2003.

V. CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMENTS

None.

VI. REPORTS TO THE COMMISSION

A. Division of Conservation Districts – Kelly McGowan

Kelly McGowan stated that there are two bills currently in the Legislature that are directly related to resolutions that were passed at the association meeting in Winnemucca.

1. Announcements

- a. Personnel vacancies – Donna Spelts and Denise Adkins have left Conservation Districts. Both positions have been given approval to be filled.
- b. Since October 2002, Kelly McGowan has attended nine conservation district meetings. He anticipates he will be able to attend more once the vacancies have been filled.
- c. Kelly McGowan has been appointed to serve as Chairman of the Walker River Conveyance Sub-Committee for the Walker River Mediation Team.
- d. In February 2003, Chris Freeman and Kelly McGowan attended the annual NACD meeting in Orlando, Florida.
- e. Kelly McGowan attended the International Erosion Control Associations annual conference in Las Vegas on February 24-25, 2003.
- f. Chris Freeman and Kelly McGowan will be attending the NACD Legislative sessions in Washington, DC, on March 14-19.
- g. Kelly McGowan is in the process of taking 40 hours of state mandated supervisor training.
- h. A retirement party is being held for Nick Pearson on Friday, March 21.
- i. Reminder – March 31 is the deadline for filing the Ethics Commission form.

B. Department of Conservation Districts – Michael Turnipseed

Pam Wilcox explained that Mike Turnipseed was unable to attend the meeting because he was at the Legislature.

C. Department of Agriculture – Don Henderson
Not present, due to attendance at a legislative hearing.

D. University of Nevada, Reno – Dr. David Thawley

1. Dr. Thawley has appointed Dr. Rangesan Narayanan as his replacement on the SCC as the UNR representative.
 - a. Dr. Narayanan gave an update on the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit. Currently, UNR, UNLV, Great Basin College, DRI, Utah State University, Idaho State University, Oregon State University, UCSD, Fresno State, Haskell University, DQ University, USGS, BLM, Forest Service, Parks Service and NRCS are members, and EPA will be joining.
 - b. The Merit Rangeland Initiative has received a funding increase of \$150,000 more than last year, almost \$600,000 total funding.
 - c. A plan material center is needed in Nevada. UNR is putting together a business plan and is dedicating the agricultural experiment station for this purpose. It will be an NRCS program and they are looking for funds from Congress to initiate this.
 - d. Efforts in native seed production continue.

- e. A bill was introduced in the Legislature to create value added products through agricultural innovation centers. If the bill passes, five centers will be funded.
- E. Natural Resources Conservation Service & Resource Conservation & Development – Nick Pearson
 - 1. Richard Vigil explained that Nick Pearson has retired and Richard has been asked to temporarily replace him.
 - a. March 1st was the deadline for Technical Service Provider (TSP) providers to come on line with the agency. A password is needed to enter the system and can be obtained through their SKIMS program. Technical Regulations are not officially out for this program.
 - b. The budget is due out in May.
 - c. Secretary Veneman announced that 200 offices will be closed nationwide and there is a moratorium on hiring and spending.
 - 2. Chris Freeman agreed to have the Nevada Association of Conservation Districts unofficially handle an award for Nick Pearson from the SCC.
- F. Farm Service Agency – Roger Van Valkenburg
 - 1. Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) are working well – FSA and NRCS are working well together at administering these programs.
 - 2. Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) is a cost share program for emergencies and disasters, including drought. Residents in most Nevada counties are eligible for this funding. If there is a question regarding a situation affected by drought, give the local county office a call to see what is available.
 - 3. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – State Committee has requested an increased rental rate. The rate is based on dry land rates, but most of the land in Nevada that people want to protect is normally irrigated and holds a higher value.
- G. Nevada Association of Conservation Districts – Chris Freeman
 - 1. The NACD office has moved to the Nevada Tahoe Conservation District (NTCD) building. The new phone numbers are (775) 586-7204 for Jackie Johnson and (775) 883-2148 for Chris Freeman at home. The new address is PO Box 4605, 297 Kingsbury Grade Suite G, Stateline, NV 89449-4605.
 - 2. The association received a favorable audit.
 - 3. Washoe-Storey Conservation District (WSCD) will be hosting the next NvACD meeting on November 5 & 6 in Virginia City. Ray Ledgerwood will be giving a workshop on capacity building for supervisors.
 - 4. Chris Freeman and Kevin Piper testified at the Legislative hearing regarding 100% funding for conservation districts.
 - 5. Reminder – Fiscal reports are due to the Commission in June, and the annual reports are due in September.
 - 6. Chris Freeman encouraged districts to take part in implementation of the Farm Bill. NACD has a training program they will be releasing shortly on the districts' involvement in getting the farm bill on the ground, and they will be hosting local working groups to develop proposals for a variety of projects that can be funded under the new farm bill.

7. Chris Freeman also encouraged conservation districts to look into Question 1 funding, particularly for watershed planning.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Discussion with the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management concerning the status of fuel loads and their future management – Commissioner Settlemeyer

James Settlemeyer stated that he felt the BLM and Forest Service need to do a better job controlling the fuel loads regardless of cost due to the loss of life this past summer. He suggested looking into alternatives such as grazing off some of the fuels.

Butch Hayes stated there are open contracts for Pinion & Juniper removal, cheat grass spraying, etc. He stated there is good potential for the districts and he would mail out information on the statewide fire plans.

Jessica Wade stated that an experiment in the Carson City area using goats to create a firebreak by grazing worked well. James Settlemeyer stated that it was stopped because it was not cost effective for the owner of the sheep.

Patsy Tomera made the motion to draft a letter to BLM and Forest Service supporting grazing as a management tool on fuel loads. Vance Vesco seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

- B. Discussion with the Nevada Division of Wildlife concerning compensation for wildlife grazing on private lands, especially during drought years – Commissioner Whipple.

Keith Whipple suggested an Animal Unit Measurement (AUM) reimbursable rate for feeding wildlife because of the reduction in harvest. Mike Cox stated that in 1991 legislation was passed to provide compensation for ranchers and farmers, one tag per 50 animals. However, the Board of Wildlife has discussed but never addressed a change to the criteria to make it fairer to those ranchers with fewer than 50 wild animals feeding on their land. He suggested that the SCC and NDOW work together to draft language to address the issue to the Board of Wildlife. The next Wildlife Commission Meeting will be held in Reno on March 14.

Keith Whipple made the motion to direct Kelly to get the item placed on the Wildlife Commission agenda and that James Settlemeyer, Kelly McGowan, and Keith Whipple will form the sub-committee to address this matter with NDOW. Patsy Tomera seconded and the motion was carried by unanimous vote.

- C. Discuss Richard Mieldazis' retirement from the State Conservation Commission effective December 31, 2002, and discuss possible award for service and time – Kelly McGowan

Kelly McGowan received an official retirement letter from Richard Mieldazis. Keith Whipple made a motion to send a letter of appreciation for Dick's years of service. Vance Vesco seconded the motion and it was carried by unanimous vote.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Discuss the Clark County District Attorney's opinion of Districts' ability to appoint associate members to the District Board of Supervisors – Commissioner Laws

Judy Laws explained that the District Attorney for Clark County ruled that the Conservation District of Southern Nevada should not designate volunteers as "associate members" of the board.

Keith Whipple made the motion to ask the State Attorney General's opinion on "associate members." Vance Vesco seconded the motion and it was carried by unanimous vote.

- B. Discuss Assembly and Senate bills that may be of interest to the Districts as well as the budget for the Division of Conservation Districts – Administrator Wilcox

Pam Wilcox gave a brief overview of the bills that the Division of Conservation Districts is currently tracking. Three bills of note to conservation districts are SB75 (provides for administration of program to provide grants for local treatment and control of invasive weeds and noxious weeds), SB172 (makes various changes concerning control of pests and plant diseases), and AB215 (authorizing conservation districts to acquire real or personal property under certain circumstances).

Judy Laws made the motion to omit section 2 of AB215 and move item 4, line 6 and 7 starting with "in furtherance of the purposes and the provisions of this chapter" to section 1, at the end of line 4. Patsy Tomera seconded the motion and it was carried by unanimous vote.

- C. Possible action on the election of a new Chairman – Commissioner Settelmeyer

Keith Whipple made the motion to elect James Settelmeyer Chairman for the duration of the term that expires on June 30, 2003. Vance Vesco seconded the motion and it was carried by unanimous vote.

The next agenda will contain an item for selection of a new Vice-Chairman.

IX. COMMISSIONER ITEMS

Pam Wilcox updated the committee on Question 1, Bond Act appropriations.

X. STAFF ITEMS

Kelly McGowan stated that he would be putting together a newsletter and hopes to get it out soon. He will also be mailing out to all Districts, a reminder notice of the date the proposed district budgets and work plans are due, and also districts current standings.

XI. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING

A. Set Time and Place

1. The next meeting will be held in Las Vegas on June 30. Vance Vesco made the motion and was seconded by Judy Laws. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Patsy Tomera motioned to adjourn the meeting. Keith Whipple seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Mori
Administrative Assistant II